

BELMONT VISION 21 IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES, JULY 25, 2002 -- (*Amended & Approved Aug 1, 2002*)

Members present: Martin Greco, Joe Greene, Matt Hausman (new member), Tim Higgins, Ralph Jones, Sarah Oaklander, Jennifer Page, Paul Solomon, Barry Winston

Members absent: Bill Hofmann, Margaret O'Brien

Also Present: Dolores Keefe

Convening the Meeting:

Jennifer Page opened the meeting at 7:05 P.M. New member Matt Hausman introduced himself to the Committee and all members did likewise. Minutes from July 18, 2002 were approved unanimously as amended: (a) noting we had agreed that the forums should be scheduled to run for no more than 2 hours; (b) noting that we agreed to provide refreshment before the start of each forum.

Long Term Planning Process: Presentation and Discussion (7:17 p.m.)

Paul Solomon presented a proposal he is developing for a coordinated long term planning process for the town. He distributed to the Committee a draft of his proposal (#10), which he plans to present to the Board of Selectmen at the July 29, 2002 BoS meeting. Since his proposal includes a significant role for the Vision Implementation Committee (VIC), he sought our feedback and suggestions.

Paul's proposal delineated a process based on the Vision and on the original mandate of the Vision Implementation Committee. If the Vision is the goal of what we want the town to become, then long-term planning should provide the route for achieving it. Essentially, Paul's plan assigns to the Vision Implementation Committee the task of facilitating, coordinating, and guiding the planning to be done by several planning task forces/ work groups, which would consist (in membership) of representatives from relevant, existing appointed and elected committees and boards, other town committees and groups, and interested citizens. No new committees would be created; existing committees and boards will continue to carry out their existing functions; the "planning task forces" will be cross-over groups. Paul feels his process fills the void between the goals of the Vision and its actual implementation; it gives planning a more pivotal role. An outside facilitator would help launch the process and assist in its initial phases. (Paul hopes/ expects this will be Cavas Gobhai.)

Jennifer Page summarized the proposal and questioned why the VIC is needed. Why not simply have the BoS (Board of Selectmen) do this? She also questioned the relationship between the BoS and VIC. Paul said that the VIC would report regularly to the BoS, but that the VIC is needed as the BoS is just too busy to do the kind of coordination and oversight that he envisions. Paul also liked the fact that the many interests represented on the VIC provide a good forum for discussion. Also, the VIC is ideal for this work because of our credibility and experience in involving many people in a process, doing outreach, coordinating many phases of citizen-input. Although the selectmen do this to some degree, this takes a major effort which we can better manage.

Paul cited an example of an ad hoc task force which currently consists of representatives from many committees: the existing "mega-group" (Cluster Planning group) that

currently meets to discuss consolidating in one central area the several capital building proposals now on the table. They have a specific goal and a very tight time frame.

A general discussion ensued. Various views were expressed:

- Ralph believed that the Board of Selectmen must be visible in their role as leaders. Will they feel comfortable giving the VIC so much control?
- Tim Higgins agreed, reiterating his belief that the leadership of the BOS is critical for success. Staff especially require strong policy to implement. Tim thinks the idea/concept is excellent but cautioned that people can get "burn out" if too many meetings are held.
- Sarah asked Jennifer Page how she felt about the VIC playing this role. Jennifer supports the concept and sees it as a return to our Committee's original intention of having task forces to plan and carry out projects which are facets of the Vision, rather than trying to do so much ourselves. Jennifer also stated that BoS will legitimize the process if they take the lead, state the priorities, and oversee - through the Vision Committee - the planning process.
- Joe Greene believes that the proposal is not much different from what the VIC is supposed to be doing. It is not a "shift" but a "method" to get more accomplished each year.
- Barry urged that members of the VIC not chair the task forces. Paul concurred; we probably need to have a liaison on each task force, but we do not need to chair them; the chair of the task forces and the representative from the VIC would report regularly to the VIC.
- Matt believes that how the committees run "planning methodology" is more important than who runs them and urged us to ensure that we develop a clear methodology which would be mandated for all the committees.
- Sarah believed the VIC should strive to create a structure or framework for the various work groups to operate under. It was generally agreed that milestones/timelines are essential, such as with the Cluster Planning Task Force.
- We wondered if several task forces could be active at the same time and "administered" by the VIC? Paul felt it was very workable; Jennifer and other concurred.
- The Committee concluded by expressing their consensual approval of Paul's proposal.

Forums for Businesses: 8:40 p.m.

Discussion turned to the proposed forums for businesses. We have not yet received Cavas' revision of the proposed schedule; he is on vacation but accessible via e-mail. Last week, we had agreed that the program would be under 2 hours plus ½ hour social proceeding such. Logistical problems remain, but the Committee agrees on the program goals and general structure. We decided that the first meeting (now scheduled for August 22) was too soon; we will schedule the forums for early September. Jennifer will contact Cavas to see if he can run the first meeting in September at a date of his selection. The other two meetings will be scheduled thereafter. Ralph Jones offered to help find meeting space in one of the school cafeterias. Next week we will develop an advertising strategy.

Tim Higgins gave a brief update of the Trapelo Road/Belmont Street corridor. He can provide a list of businesses the VIC can employ to advertise the forums.

Looking ahead, Jennifer announced that the VIC will NOT meet Thursday, August 15.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim Higgins, Senior Planner